

Shoring Up Our Lifeguard Facilities

By Council President Scott Peters, First District

As the spring days turn warmer, families flock to the beaches in our community. But for as much as we pay lip service to the value of our beaches, our support for their infrastructure has not kept up. Several of the lifeguard towers in La Jolla have been in service for decades, and are more than showing their age. The cracks, rusted rebar and warped wood are not only unsightly, they pose a hazard to the men and women of the San Diego Lifeguard service. We recently had a lifeguard injured on the wooden stairs at the Children's Pool station.

I have long advocated for improvements to the La Jolla lifeguard towers. The roles and responsibilities of lifeguards have changed dramatically since many of our stations were built. The lifeguard service now includes both men and women, uses more advanced equipment and demands more advanced training. These changes require additional space for storage, locker rooms for both sexes and additional office space. It's important that we built facilities that will accommodate long-term growth and change within the lifeguard service.

Over the past few years, I have worked with city staff and community members toward rehabilitating three lifeguard towers in La Jolla, at the Shores, the Cove and the Children's Pool.

The La Jolla Shores tower will be a beautiful facility that reflects the unique character of La Jolla through public art and other design features. It will house modern safety and rescue equipment and locker room facilities for both men and women. And it will be built in a way that minimizes visual impact for homeowners along the beach.

In order to keep the main tower smaller, we will also construct a small structure in the parking lot to store rescue vehicles. This will be a great improvement from the current rusty storage locker that has caused several injuries to lifeguards.

The station at La Jolla Cove will be similar to the one at the Shores. It is designed by the same architect, and will feature some of the same designs to minimize visual impact.

The only facility still waiting for approval is at the Children's Pool, which is probably the station in greatest need of a facelift. Not only is there no facility for female lifeguards, the station's rescue equipment sometimes doubles as a lunch table! Parts of the station have been closed off because they are too dangerous to enter. Needless to say, an expanded facility is needed. I am continuing to work with the lifeguards and the community on facility needs and aesthetics.

Once the city is able to return to the bond market later this year, we can break ground on these much-needed improvements. The Cove and Shores towers have been designed and approved, and are simply waiting to be funded.

I know visitors and residents will be proud of these improvements in support of recreation and public safety.